(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Commissioner of Railway Safety/Eastern Circle has conducted the statutory inquiry into this accident.

Commissioner of Railway Safety/Eastern Circule has attributed the accident to "Opening of fish Plates and elastic rail clips of the cess side single rail in Howrah end approach of bridge No. 445 by miscreants." He has classified the accident under the category of "Sabotage".

He has fixed the primary responsibility with the 'unknown' persons, who willfully tampered with the track with the intent of causing harm to the travelling public and damage to the Railway property.

(e) Following steps are being taken to prevent probability of similar accidents caused by "Sabotage" :—

(i) Instructions have been issued to reduce the number of fish plated joints, wherever feasible and for burring of two fish bolts, one on each rail, at joints located in the stretches considered vulnerable.

(ii) Efforts are also being made to develop an anti-theft elastic rail clip and fish bolt fastening.

(iii) Close liaison is being maintained with State Police Departments, wherever required for prevention of crime of such types on Railway tracks and bridges.

(iv) Comprehensive safety drives are conducted covering various aspects of safe passage of trains, involving cross sections of inspectors, supervisors and officers.

Fall in Kharif production

*78. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY:
SHRI BALKAVI BAIRAGI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether his attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the 'Economic Times', dated 25th September, 2002, titled "Kharif grain production may fall 18 per cent to 90.8 m. tonne";

(b) what is the current estimate of foodgrains and oil seeds production in this Kharif season and the measures initiated by Government to tide over the crisis in case of shortfall; and

(c) the relief provided to the affected farmers?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a)Yes, Sir.

(b) As per the first advance estimates as on November 12, 2002, the Total production of kharif foodgrains during 2002-03 is expected to be 90.64 million tonnes, and the production of kharif oilseeds is expected to be 9.89 million tonnes. As the stock position of foodgrains in the country is much above the buffer norm, there is no crisis. This is also borne out by the fact that the Wholesale Price Index (Base 1993-94=100) in respect of foodgrains increased only marginally by 1.1 per cent over the year ended November 2, 2002. However, in order to enable the farmers to achieve higher levels of production and productivity a number of initiatives have been taken by the Government. These include promotion of watershed development, development and promotion of new technology, switch from conventional schematic approach to macro-management scheme to provide flexibility to states in addressing specific problems based on local requirements. As regards oilseeds, in addition to the measures aimed at promoting production and productivity, import of edible oils is allowed freely to bridge the gap between domestic production and availability.

(c) Keeping in view the need to compensate farmers for the losses suffered in unirrigated areas and the additional expenditure incurred in irrigated areas, the Government announced Special Drought Relief price ranging from Rs. 5 to Rs. 20 per quintal for kharif crops of 2002-03 season. States have been assisted through advance release in August 2002 of the Central Share of Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) due in November, 2002 amounting in all to Rs.1227.29 crores. Besides, 19.25 lakh tonnes of foodgrains free of cost have also been allocated for generation of relief employment. Besides, the High Level Committee has approved assistance of Rs.1999.14 crores to the various drought affected States subject, however, to adjustment of balances available in the CRF of these States.

Hike in tuition fees in Kendriya Vidyalayas

*79. DR. ABRAR AHMED: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Expenditure Reforms Commission (ERC), set up by the Union Government has recommended a hike in the tuition fees in Kendriya Vidyalayas; if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether Government have since accepted this recommendation?